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by Matthew M. Mestrovic

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THE
Commonweal
A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts
THIRTY-SEVENTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

week by week

CHANGING WORLD, CHANGING U.N.

ONE OF THE most incisive and caustic criticisms of the Presidential campaign was a Jules Feiffer cartoon directed not at the candidates themselves but at the political commentators who reported on and analyzed their statements. In one of his inimitable columns he presented two sophisticated Eastern types each of whom realized that many of the political commentators seemed more informed, more courageous, more precise than any of the candidates. The conclusion was obvious; they soon drew up a new roster of candidates for both political parties, composed, of course, entirely of those commentators who were full of ideas, exhaustive analyses and happy solutions.

The basis for this exaggerated criticism was found scattered through the daily papers—and it can still be found. But as the incoming Kennedy Administration proposes to take over, the tone of much political commentary has subtly but noticeably changed. Along with general praise for the nature of John Kennedy's appointments and uneasy gratitude that he is preparing to be a strong executive, there is a note of worried sympathy because of the grave problems to which he has succeeded. And in at least one recent roundup of news correspondents the easy solution was little in evidence. When Edward R. Murrow, acting as chairman, asked various C.B.S. correspondents to report on the areas they covered—France, West Germany, the Far East, Africa and the Middle East, etc.—their reports on events of last year were not happy, nor their outlook for the future optimistic.

Perhaps the most hopeful comment was that made by the correspondent from France and Algeria, who said the outlook for a peaceful settlement was never better—and that disaster never seemed more imminent. The dangers inherent in the unstable and potentially explosive relations between France and Algeria find their counterparts in situations around the globe. The list is all too familiar—Berlin, the Congo, Laos, the offshore islands, Cuba, the Middle East. And beyond and hovering over all of these are problems of the Bomb, arms control, and disarmament.

IF SOLUTIONS are found to these and the other manifold problems, many will be found in an ordinary way, e.g., by the usual means of diplomacy, by bilateral and multilateral agreements, by limited conflicts, by time and inanition, or in an extraordinary way, e.g., by summit conferences. But many, if they are to be found, will be reached principally through the agency of the United Nations.

In the years of its existence the U.N. has scored enough solid accomplishments to render any defense of its existence supererogatory. Nevertheless it would be foolish to deny that it has sometimes failed in its endeavors and equally foolish not to recognize that its rapid growth has been accompanied by real changes. While many of these changes, such as the inclusion of the new Afro-Asian countries, were both inevitable and desirable, they did not take place without cost to the aspirations of the great powers.

Although the United Nations has already been tested by some stormy events, it is likely to encounter even more turbulent times very soon. Before the U.N. Assembly meets next March, the list of continuing problems and imminent crises with which it must deal is certain to grow. And one of the crises which all the nations of the world must soon face is the immediate condition of the U.N. itself—its changing nature, its present stresses and its untapped potential.

The changing nature of the U.N. is nowhere more

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evident than in the new division of power in the Assembly. With the admission of sixteen new African states, which increased membership to ninety-nine, a new bloc of Afro-Asian nations was possible. Neither the Western powers nor the U.S.S.R. will again readily dominate, and since this seems to represent a shift of power from the West there have been ready expressions of dissatisfaction.

What is called for, however, is not sharper criticism of the U.N., or graver suspicion, but reevaluation of how we can best function in and through its agencies. For the U.N. is still the nearest approximation to a voice of world opinion. And one of the reasons that it is undergoing a crisis at this time is that Mr. Khrushchev seems intent on muffling that voice. The great problem for the United States in the coming years will be to distinguish between those situations in which it will wish to act as sole agent, those in which it will act in concordance with its allies and those in which it will channel its efforts through the U.N. By making proper distinctions we are not only more likely to accomplish our goals, but we are more likely to seize the initiative, regain lost prestige, and restore confidence in our leadership.

THE PRESIDENT ON RACE

PRESIDENT Eisenhower has been criticized by many people, including the editors of this magazine, for his failure to provide leadership in the troubled area of racial tension. Such criticisms were, we think, quite fair. In handling the race question, Mr. Eisenhower has consistently played down the proper role of law and government in matters affecting Negroes as citizens; he has by and large contented himself with urging changes "in the hearts and minds of men," an approach more relevant to the complete integration of Negroes into the whole of private as well as public life in America than to the desegregation of public facilities, which is, after all, what is at issue in New Orleans and elsewhere. Because we would count ourselves among Mr. Eisenhower's critics on this score, however, we are very glad to call attention to the President's treatment of this subject in his annual Christmas message.

"We are grateful for all the material comforts with which we have been blessed," Mr. Eisenhower said; "we take great pride in our country's preeminent position in the family of nations. Yet, as we look into the mirror of conscience, we see blots and blemishes that mar the picture of a nation of people who devoutly believe that they are created in the image of their Maker. Too often we discern an apathy toward violations of laws and standards of public and private integrity. When, through bitter prejudice and because of differences in skin pigmentation, individuals cannot enjoy equality of political and economic opportunity, we see another of those imperfections, one that is equally plain to those living beyond our border."

In citing Mr. Eisenhower's Christmas address, we recognize that there is a certain validity to much of the criticism that has since been leveled at it. It is true that the President's remarks were not very specific, that he talked only about "differences in skin pigmentation," that he referred to "equality of political and economic opportunity" but did not say anything specifically about New Orleans, the public schools and the Supreme Court decision on desegregation, and, above all, that he made his remarks when he had only a few weeks left in his term. As far as the failure to be specific is concerned, however, it seems to us that here allowances have to be made for a certain vagueness of expression that is characteristic of many of Mr. Eisenhower's public expressions. And while it is true that his remarks would have been most welcome earlier in his tenure, we at least are glad that he made them before leaving the White House.

DANGER IN LAOS

ONE OF the most difficult situations confronting a Washington in the state of transition is the battle for the remote, strategic Kingdom of

NEXT WEEK

GREGORY BAUM writes about the concept of natural law in the light of ecumenicism.

"Is there anything the Church can say that is relevant for the millions of men without faith in God and His Son, Jesus Christ? This is the question which Protestant Christians are beginning to take very seriously. . . . According to the age-old tradition of natural law, it is the vocation of man, of every man, to be faithful to what is most profound in him. Morality is not something added to man from without. . . . Man is destined to morality by the very fact that he is a man."

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Laos. At the moment an American-supported anti-Communist government, headed by Prince Boun Oum and General Phoumi Nosavan, is on top. But in order to get there its armed forces had to destroy a large part of the Laotian capital and take many lives. Moreover, before the fighting for the capital began, the Communist contingents withdrew with personnel and equipment intact, leaving Captain Kong Le and his "neutralists" to suffer the casualties. Both of these contingents have regrouped in the North and are united under a Communist command whose supplies are being beefed up.

What most worries the State Department is the open Communist involvement in this struggle. The Soviets have made little attempt to conceal their intervention, and reports gaining credence say that North Vietnamese troops are joining the anti-government forces. Chinese troop movements are also reported not far away. Official Peiping statements about present Chinese food shortages due to the appalling ravages of floods and drought tend to make the danger of Chinese intervention in the major rice-producing area lying between the Bay of Bengal and the South China Sea that much more ominous.

In backing the Boun Oum government at this juncture, the United States stands virtually alone. We are warmly supported, if not spurred on, by our Thailand ally. But France and Britain believe that the Laotian government will lack stability until it gives representation to "neutralist" and Pathet Lao Communist elements. India and other neutrals are even more pronounced in this opinion. Many would recall the International Control Commission (India, Poland and Canada) which retired from Laos in 1958—and some would even support the Soviet request to revive the Geneva Conference of 1954 on Indo-China.

The American position is that Communist elements, once given representation, would soon take over the Laotian government, that recall of the Commission would block any hearing of charges of overt Communist intervention. Yet, happily the State Department does not believe that General Phoumi's troops have settled things. Obviously the Laotian people do not want to be pawns in an East-West conflict, but it is too early to tell how many of them support the present government.

There is growing favor in this country for the idea of building up the newly emerging Afro-Asian nations as strong and genuinely neutral States. Is such a formula feasible for every new nation at this stage, for Laos? It can be argued that conditions have markedly changed since the 1954 Geneva Conference, and even since the Control Commission adjournment. Perhaps what is needed, then, is a new *démarche* under United Nations auspices—a representative group comprised wholly of disinterested neutrals to review the evidence and forestall a conflict that could take on the character and proportions of the war in Korea.

THE REGULATORY AGENCIES

PRESIDENT-ELECT Kennedy is being praised for his appointments, statements and actions by almost every newspaper in the country, it seems, regardless of its stand during the campaign. One of the steps Mr. Kennedy took which won almost totally unqualified approval was his commissioning of James M. Landis to investigate the situation of the federal regulatory agencies. Now Dean Landis's report on his investigation has been submitted to the Senator, and it in turn is also being praised.

This is as it should be, for the report drawn up by the former dean of the Harvard Law School, himself a veteran of agency service in the early days of the New Deal, is comprehensive, straightforward and courageous. Furthermore, the report states explicitly pretty much what everybody felt was wrong with the agencies but which most had despaired of ever hearing from anyone close to the White House.

One of Mr. Landis's sharpest criticisms, for instance, had to do with the caliber of appointees to the agencies. In the words of the report, "Top administrative positions appear to have been sought frequently as stepping stones to further political preference, or to positions of importance within the industries subject to regulation." Qualified men within the agencies, it adds, have been passed over in favor of unqualified outsiders for appointments to high positions.

Underlying this unhappy condition, of course, is the next factor cited by the report as a cause of the "deterioration" of the agencies. This, inescapably, is the failure of Presidential leadership and responsibility. "During the last decade," the report continues, "the Executive seems to have had no real concern" with the operation of the regulatory agencies. And then there is the practice of "Executive interference," which has recently been called by a number of less polite names in the steady stream of complaints and investigations by Congressional committees and others.

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The report goes on, in a methodical, scathing indictment of the performance and practices of all the agencies, which are without exception found deficient, although in greater and lesser degrees. Much stress is placed in the report on organizational flaws of various kinds, but the principal weaknesses of the regulatory agencies, the Landis study concludes, are in appointments and in Presidential leadership.

Like almost everyone else who has commented on the report, we agree with Mr. Landis, and we are greatly encouraged by the vigor and uncompromising idealism which mark his study. It is true, as has been said, that correcting these deficiencies will not be so easy as pointing them out. But the fact that they have been pointed out, in a special study commissioned by Mr. Kennedy as one of his first acts after the election and welcomed by him upon its completion, makes it possible to hope that the new Administration is seriously interested in correcting the deficiencies which have been enumerated.

It is encouraging, too, that the Landis report has been so warmly received by commentators in conservative as well as liberal publications. But we can't help wondering what changed so many minds so quickly. The Landis report—which adds up to a relentless bill of charges against President Eisenhower (to some extent against President Truman, too), even more than agency personnel and practice—actually says little more than has been said for years by various "liberals" and "do-gooders" and been dismissed for years as "muckraking," "partisanship" and "unfair attacks" on a leader who was above politics. When critics of the regulatory agencies from time to time called attention to the dreary procession of Eisenhower appointees who managed to involve themselves in "conflicts of interest" and similar "unfortunate" situations—a procession, by the way, which began in the first years of Mr. Eisenhower's first term and continued up until a few months ago—the standard response from almost every quarter was angry cries of "smear," "what about Truman?" and "the king can do no wrong."

Today, water over the dam as it may be, it is a severe temptation for charter members of this critics' club to say "I told you so"—and a few other things as well. Yet, severe or not, it is a temptation to be resisted, for the nation will have trouble enough in trying to cope with the problems of the present and future. At least it can be said that the Landis report supplies a badly needed instrument for coping with some of these problems, and Mr. Kennedy's forthright endorsement of the report permits one to hope that he will use it.

LITURGICAL CHANGES

AMONG THE TOPICS scheduled for consideration at the Ecumenical Council next year is that of liturgical reform. Without waiting for the larger items that will be considered at that time, however, Pope John authorized a series of changes in the missal, the Church calendar and the priest's breviary to take effect on January 1st.

The revisions ordered by Pope John represent the first substantial alteration in the breviary and missal for almost fifty years and the first over-all, large-scale changes in four centuries. Because of "the growing burden of pastoral duties," certain readings from the lives of the saints and the Fathers of the Church have been dropped from the priest's daily office, cutting the reading time from approximately one hour to about fifty minutes. Many feasts in the Church calendar have been reclassified; eight feasts from the cycle of the saints have been abolished for reasons of duplication, historical ambiguity or the like. In general, the revised calendar places more emphasis on those feasts directly relating to Christ. In the Mass itself, the most noticeable change involves the elimination of the second *Confiteor* from its place immediately before the people's Communion.

All in all, it is safe to say that the changes are considerably less sweeping than many liturgists hoped for. This is perhaps particularly true as far as the breviary is concerned, where it was thought by many that the changes would be more substantial. Clearly, however, Pope John thought it wiser to make only minor changes now, and this means that consideration of more thorough-going liturgical reforms will be an important task for the Ecumenical Council.

Big step or little, every liturgical advance should be welcomed, and we welcome this one. And while the world waits for the Ecumenical Council's deliberations, it may not be inappropriate to hope that the spirit as well as the letter of these reforms will be followed. Take, for instance, a relatively minor point—the strong disapproval expressed in the revised rubrics for such practices as the distribution of Holy Communion to the people at improper times. Questions such as these could once be dismissed as of interest only to "liturgy bugs," but by now it should be clear to everyone that they are of deep concern in Rome as well.

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Poland Under the Cross

The presence of Soviet power is, and will remain in the years to come, a cardinal fact of Polish national life

by MATTHEW M. MESTROVIC

POLAND—the endless, monotonous plain of woods and fields, the clattering horse carts on cobblestone roads, the squalid gray villages, and everywhere the pink-cheeked, fair-haired children, poor but scrubbed and neat in their Sunday best. These were the first fleeting impressions of Poland as one sped towards Poznan on a late and cloudy afternoon not so long ago. In the ensuing fortnight a thousand other glimpses, faces, and impressions crowded into the mind. Churches filled with worshipers until they could no longer contain the multitude and it overflowed into the street; the hole in the wall dive in Krakow where young beatniks gather for a night of jazz and rock-'n'roll; the hundreds of roadside crucifixes and shrines to the Madonna; the prosperous, worldly Warsaw satirist proud of his blue Renault and pretty blonde wife.

All these and a thousand more are each individual pieces of a vast national mosaic. But what then is the dominant mood, the grand design? There are, of course, the Sartre and Elvis Presley partisans, girls in tight blue jeans and young men who wear their wisdom in their beards. But these are the curious aberrations of the few living on the periphery of Polish life. What does the farmer in his field near Poznan or the steel worker in Nowa Huta know or care about these things? Their hearts, like those of most of the Polish people, are stirred by deep religious faith and fierce love of fatherland.

Child of this love of God and country is Old Warsaw. Battered to the ground by crazed Nazis in 1944, the Old City has been rebuilt stone by stone, brick by brick, just as it had been, with its crenelated battlements, its medieval houses, its narrow winding streets. All this has been done at huge cost at a time when whole families live crowded in one room for lack of housing and villagers go dressed in rags. And yet the Pole tells you with pride, "Not a voice was raised against the rebuilding of Old Warsaw." For the Poles, Old Warsaw is more than a precious monument of the past. It is living proof of the nation's will to survive all calamity that may be wrought upon it.

Is there a clearer challenge to foreign despotism than the bronze figure of King Sigismund III, cross in one hand, drawn sword in the other, standing atop a slender column in the heart of Warsaw? "It's the first monument we rebuilt after the war," the visitor is told pointedly. The great warrior king looks out across the eastern plain, towards the Kremlin his armies seized three centuries ago—but where, at the time the statue was reerected, Stalin was the master.

No red banners flutter in the Polish sky, no oversized red stars decorate Polish trucks rumbling down the highway. Motoring across Poland one does not see those Russian soldiers in brown uniforms, so conspicuously present in East Germany. And yet, though invisible to the traveler's eye, they are there. Soviet troops are west of the Oder river, in East Germany; Soviet troops are across the border in Russia, one hundred miles east of Warsaw; Soviet troops are inside Poland itself, stationed mainly in the western regions of the country. The Kremlin's soldiery is confined to specific districts and kept out of sight as much as possible so as not to offend the Poles' sensitive national pride. But the presence of Soviet power is, and will remain in years to come, a cardinal fact of Polish national life.

ANOTHER HUNGARY was in the making in the turbulent fall of 1956 when Christian Poland headed for a headlong clash with Soviet power. The cup had spilled over for the brave, reckless Poles. No longer would they suffer the harsh rule of the domestic Stalinists. But Khrushchev, though willing enough to sacrifice the Bermans and the Sokolowskys, would not permit a non-Communist government to be set up in Warsaw—not even one loyal to the Kremlin. At the

Mr. Mestrovic, who teaches at Fairleigh Dickinson University in New Jersey, recently returned from a visit to Poland.

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critical moment, when Poland's fate hung in the balance, a bargain was struck. The Poles won a degree of liberty, the Communist minority retained the reins of power, and the Soviets maintained their mastery of Eastern Europe. Stefan Cardinal Wyszynski and Wladyslaw Gomulka are the chief architects of this compromise. The two leaders, fervent devotees of conflicting world faiths, both bargained as realists to preserve their common fatherland from Hungary's fate.

Above all, the Polish October unfettered the spirit. Now the Pole may read the other side of the story in the *Times* of London, *Le Monde* or the European edition of the New York *Herald Tribune*. And to my surprise, even The Commonweal and *America* are received and read in Poland. In sharp contrast the only "Western" papers the Czech can read are the London Communist *Worker*, the French *L'Humanité* and the Italian *Unitá*. Small things, but small things that count, that separate free men from slaves.

The Czech glances around in fear and talks to you in whispers. The Pole speaks straight from the heart without fear of the faceless informer. And in the bookstores of Warsaw, Poznan, and Krakow volumes by Graham Greene, Maritain, Mauriac, Steinbeck stand beside Marx, Lenin, Tolstoy to nourish the searching minds of the young.

Poland stands apart from other Communist lands in the degree of religious freedom her people enjoy. In Poland you see kneeling soldiers and even officers at Mass, an unthinkable sight in East Germany and Czechoslovakia. And chaplains as well as political commissars serve in the Polish army. There's a Catholic university in Lublin, which, though beset by great material difficulties, somehow survives and continues to educate the leaders of tomorrow. The vast majority of the students in public schools attend religion class on a voluntary basis. In Poland, too, a significant Catholic clerical and lay press exerts influence on public opinion.

All this is not to say that Christianity's fate under Communism is a happy one. Daily, Church and state clash on a myriad of issues. One problem debated in the open is government advocacy of birth control and legalized abortion. While the Catholic Church opposes both on moral grounds from the pulpit and by printed word, the government has marshalled its propaganda apparatus to advance its claim that the rapid population increase which has carried Poland's population from 19,000,000 to 28,000,000 in the past fifteen years tends to impair the already low standard of living, creates overcrowding of homes and schools and threatens to create a serious unemployment problem.

In Poland the government has power to grant and to deny all things. And the government has chosen to permit public debate of birth control and abortion. But it denies similar freedom to present the Catholic view on other important issues of the day. For its part, the government feels free to propagate Communism over the state-controlled T.V., radio, and press. Nor does the state hesitate to use unfair tactics in an attempt to discredit Catholics. Recently, for instance, the Communist press charged that in a hospital nuns had refused to care for patients who did not wish to receive the sacrament of penance. Government censors then proceeded to bar the Catholic press from denying the baseless accusation. Every printed word must be submitted in advance to Communist censorship, making the Catholic press as free as a man behind bars. Under the circumstances the Catholic press cannot present the facts as it sees them. And of course the political status quo in Poland and the Soviet Union are sacred cows above and beyond even implied criticism.

ONE OF THE most curious results of the Polish October was the emergence of what one prominent intellectual termed a "symbolic Catholic representation" in the Polish Sejm (parliament). A minute group of 11 Catholic deputies sits there beside 396 Communists and their allies and 54 independents. Nine of the Catholic deputies are organized in a parliamentary club called *Znak*. Leaders of the liberal Catholic elite, they are associated with the Krakow weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny* and the philosophical review *Znak*. They speak for the dominant stream of the Catholic intelligentsia and are avowed "non-Marxists" in their social and political philosophy, but they support Poland's pro-Soviet foreign policy.

One of the remaining Catholic deputies speaks for the *Pax* organization which publishes the only Catholic daily in Poland, the *Slowo Powszechny*. The leader of this grouping, Boleslaw Piasecki, a prewar fascist turned Communist, has been accused of being the chief Soviet agent within Polish Catholicism. *Pax* supports Soviet foreign policy abroad and in Poland the "dictatorship of the proletariat at the present stage of history." *Pax* asserts that man can remain faithful to Catholic religious dogma, thus rejecting dialectical materialism, while supporting a thoroughgoing Communistic organization of society, including the socialization of both industry and agriculture.

The last of the Catholic deputies, Dr. Jan Frankowski, publishes the illustrated weekly *Tygodnik Illustrowany* and its supplement *Za i Przeciw* (For and Against). He leads a group that broke away from *Pax* after the Polish October and now stands ideologically between the *Pax* and *Znak* groupings. Dr. Frankowski's group believes that Communism will inevitably spread and consequently Catholics everywhere will have to learn how to live under the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The *Znak* organization owes its influence principally to two factors. It has succeeded in drawing together some of the nation's ablest liberal Catholic intellectuals,

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people such as the writer, musician, and deputy Stefan Kisielewski; the editor Jerzy Turowicz, who has made the *Tygodnik Powszechny* into Poland's most respected weekly; Dr. Stanislaw Stomma, a university professor who led the *Znak* deputies in the Sejm. But more important still, the *Znak* grouping stands closest to Cardinal Wyszynski, the venerated spiritual leader of the nation. In fact the *Znak* grouping owes its existence to the Cardinal's expressed desire in 1956, and Gomulka's acquiescence, that Catholic laymen be granted at least a limited voice in the nation's affairs. One of the *Znak* deputies, Professor Jerzy Zawieyski, is a member of the Council of State, which in Poland is a sort of collective Chief of State. Through the Council, the *Znak* group has direct access to Gomulka.

THE CATHOLIC liberal intelligentsia believes that it can better serve the nation by taking part in its life under Communism rather than by renouncing its role of leadership and passively withdrawing. Politics is the art of the possible, and Catholic intellectuals think they are merely facing up to the facts of Polish life. First and foremost among the external realities shaping Poland's destiny is the presence of a powerful Soviet Communist state on its eastern borders. This fact alone makes it imperative for Poland to conduct a "pro-Soviet" foreign policy.

The second great fact of Polish life is the presence of Germany on its western borders. About one third of present-day Poland was acquired from Germany at the end of the Second World War. Poland as a nation needs the support of the Soviet Union to keep its western borders against the claims of a resurgent Germany. "Few men hated Poland more than Stalin. And yet by giving them the German lands east of the Oder river he chained the Poles to Russia," a foreign observer told me in Warsaw. The Poles have forgotten nothing. But they have learned something from history. They know that a policy of enmity towards both Germany and Russia has led to the dismemberment of their nation five times in two centuries. They have not forgotten the dead of the Katyn forest nor Stalin's role in Warsaw's destruction in 1944. But these crimes perpetrated on the Poles are as nothing compared to the six million victims of Nazi rule. Is it then hard to understand Poland's suspicions and fears?

In the minds of the Poles, Uncle Sam is a year-round Santa Claus, and America a happy never-never land of plenty. "Ah, without the American food parcels we would have starved that terrible winter of 1945," an old, shriveled-up lady recalled in Poznan. And the Poles know that they would have to tighten their belts but for the U.S. grain ships steaming into Gdynia this year. The Poles are grateful for America's economic policy of charity for all. But they shake their heads in doubt when you speak to them about American foreign policy. "The U.S. policy of containment, and the U.S. policy of liberation, they made no difference to us in Poland. But Russia's Twentieth Party Congress brought changes for the better in Poland," I was told by a professor. So it is not surprising that the Poles' only long-term hope for a better life is that the Russians themselves will demand more freedom and human dignity. Said a twenty-year-old student, "Only the East wind can bring us greater freedom."

The Poles' faith in the West died at Yalta and was buried with Hungary. Bitter memories of their nation betrayed in World War II still linger on and gnaw at the Pole's heart. Said a middle-aged Pole in Warsaw, "I told an Englishman the other day, 'In the next war we Poles will fight to the last Englishman.'" The prestige of the West was further eroded last year by what the Poles regard as the bungling of the U-2 incident and the fiasco of President Eisenhower's projected visit to Japan. "What I don't understand," said one young Pole, "is how the State Department knew nothing of the conditions prevailing in Japan. All of us here in Poland knew the disturbances were such that the trip would have to be cancelled." If nothing else, the Poles' attitude indicates that the U.S. has failed to get across its side of the story.

THE POLES are cautious regarding their own future prospects. They know their fate in part depends on the outcome of the worldwide struggle between the forces of Christianity and Communism. But they don't wait for others to bring them salvation. They believe that God helps those who help themselves. But of one thing they are certain. There will be no return to Stalinism in Eastern Europe simply because the Soviet leaders and people have rejected it. Nobody can predict the outcome of their own Polish experiment of coexistence between Catholicism and Communism. True, it is dangerous to dine with the devil. But in Poland's instance the inherent dangers may be lessened by the unity and strength of a deeply Christian nation.

Rain poured as I bade goodby to Krakow on my way to Cieszyn and the Czechoslovak border. The gray, sunless sky made the little factory towns look even drabber and older, relics of a Central Europe gone with the Hapsburgs. The life of the rain-drenched peasants and workers looked even harder, their needs more pressing, their wants more painful. Each country gives you of itself. Poland does not have France's grace, the ordered well-being of West Germany, the cultural treasures of Italy. But you are drawn to Poland, you love her for the beauty of her people, intelligent, proud, honest, witty, brave. Theirs is a noble spirit untarnished by despotic terror, cruel fate, material poverty. They give you of their own. One leaves enriched by faith in man's undaunted spirit.

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THE POLITICAL SENSE

FOR YEARS the press, religious and secular, ran articles about the Catholic-for-President issue. Learned lectures were given on the subject, television panel shows built around it, furious sermons preached against the possibility, manifestoes signed, and earnest statements drawn up. And now, after all this, we have a President who is a Catholic, a living, breathing man about to take the oath of office—and suddenly the articles and books, lectures and sermons, panel discussions, manifestoes, and statements seem terribly remote and irrelevant.

I ask myself why this is so, and the answer is that the entire controversy was unreal from the beginning. It dealt not with the human realities of a given candidate running at a given time on a given ticket but with abstract propositions, theses, doctrinal pronouncements of one kind or another, and syllogistic conclusions. What all of them lacked was a political sense, which I take to be a sense of the concretely possible as over against the abstractly probable.

The problems about a Catholic President we discussed so long were always probable, within the abstract framework of the argument; but, given the person who is about to enter the White House, the political system of which he is a part, the traditions of the nation and temper of the people, they were never truly possible. Before one could even conceive of their being possible, all the realities of the case had to be obliterated. Instead of John F. Kennedy, a Democrat from Massachusetts, one had to deal with an Everyman called Catholicus; instead of the familiar faces in Congress, from Sam Rayburn's ancient frown to the nervous smile of the youngest Representative, one had to deal with a faceless creature called Legislator; instead of the American people as we know ourselves to be, one had to deal with a Populus without history, tradition, prejudice or passion. The mixed lot of prelates whose quirks and character are familiar to us had to become a corporation called The Hierarchy before we could proceed with the discussion, and the benign peasant priest in the Vatican had to become a nondescript Sovereign Pontiff.

With changes of this kind, there were all sorts of frightening possibilities just a few months ago. Now, faced with the actual situation of a Catholic in the White House, the recent arguments seem like a kind of game having nothing to do with the real world.

We no longer ask ourselves, what would a Catholic do in such and such a situation? We ask, what will Kennedy do and will he manage to bring it off? We no longer think about the abstract reactions of an abstract Congress but about the concrete reactions of Senator Goldwater and Representative Lindsay, Senator Paul Douglas and Representative Adam Clayton Powell. We no longer talk about the Hierarchy but speculate about Cardinal Spellman, Bishop Wright, and our local Ordinary whose peculiar ways may be well known to us. Even Pope John XXIII, taking the place of a constructed Papacy, is very unremote. Some things that could be expected from Leo XIII or Pius XI we can not imagine the present Pontiff doing.

There are things John F. Kennedy would find it impossible to do simply because he is the kind of person he is. There are things that a Lyndon Johnson, or a Barry Goldwater could not do without undergoing a complete transformation of character. There are things that a Cardinal Spellman could not do without becoming quite another person, and other things that would be impossible to a Bishop Wright. Most of all, there are the American people themselves. As a people, we are what we are and nothing short of a miracle could make us behave other than the way we do.

I bring up all this not to harp on the Catholic-for-President issue. I recognize that long before election day that whole subject became a vast bore. My point, rather, is that abstractions and propositions and theses are a very poor guide for one who is concerned with political probabilities. What matters in politics are people and their loyalties to the persons, institutions, traditions and cultural patterns they believe in.

Of course, we cannot deal with the larger political questions without abstractions. But, unless they are to be forever assigned to an academic limbo, even these larger political questions must be related to lower-case actualities rather than to upper-case categories.

Take, for instance, the Puerto Rican affair that blew up so dramatically before the election. One Catholic spokesman from the island was quoted as saying he did not realize the Bishops' action would have any effect on the mainland since it was purely a Puerto Rican matter. What kind of political sense did the man have that he thought there would be no reverberations in the United States, with a Catholic running for Presiden? As little, I would say, as the Bishops themselves must have if they truly believed their pastoral letters would have anything but a pro-Munoz effect on the election.

Politics, the art of the possible. That sturdy old definition is the heart of the matter. If it had been taken seriously, the discussions about a Catholic President would have taken a different turn and now, even before a Catholic President has taken office, would not seem as out-of-this-world as the *Filioque* controversy.

JOHN COGLEY.

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A Question of Man

by JOSEPH H. McMAHON

THE AWARD of the Nobel Prize in Literature to Alexis Léger, the poet-diplomat who writes under the evocative pseudonym of Saint-John Perse, is an honor of more than passing interest and concern to this country, for it is a reminder of some of those basic American values we tend to forget in the tangle of discussions on organization men, lonely crowds and ascending or declining prestige.

It was to this country that the new laureate turned when he exiled himself from France in 1940; it was in this country, thanks to the awareness and care of Archibald MacLeish, that he found the personal and economic support that might easily have been overlooked in such pressing times; it was here that the bulk of his poetry was written, and it was here, in 1950, that he received his first important literary award: the gold medal of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Mentioning these various facts is in no way meant to suggest the Léger has become an American poet, even though he was born in this hemisphere. He has remained determinedly French, convinced that the sources of his intellectual habits are as thoroughly French as is his language, convinced, too, that no matter where he may find himself geographically he is spiritually a son of France whose "last breath like (his) first will be French." But the welcome and interest he found in this country, at what was assuredly a difficult moment, is a tribute to the honesty and generosity of those American intellectuals and artists whose reaction to the cataclysm of the world war was expressed in a vast and widespread effort to offer their resources and publications as a temporary replacement for the vehicles of cultural transmission abruptly halted by the hostilities.

New York and Washington in those years were not only notable for the sudden presence of uniformed men never before seen in such great numbers; they were also notable for a large and diversified international society more cosmopolitan and gifted than at any previous moment in the history of the two cities. Fortunately, its members were not forced into silence. In American universities and in the pages of this country's literary journals they found forums for their ideas, their works and their anguish. Thus, during a period of some five years, there developed one of those infrequent but valuable situations where one part of a civilization sought to assume, humbly and with no sense of chauvinism, the difficult task of preserving a consciousness of seriously threatened values.

It was a good moment, a sort of bright spot left in a dark spectrum in order to remind the doubtful that the war was being fought for something beyond simple balances of power. And, as Erwin Panofsky has suggested, it was an instructive moment for all concerned, affording this country a rare privilege, while simultaneously showing European exiles how much the United States had come of intellectual and cultural age and how deeply its institutions were conscious of the responsibilities thrust upon them.

IN THE case of Alexis Léger, however, there was a noble irony involved. The poems (*"Eloges," "Anabase," "Amitié du Prince"*) he had published prior to his decision in 1924 to give no further public dimension to his work so long as he was actively and importantly involved in the French Foreign Office, had frequently alluded to a kind of geographic cultural dynamism, a shifting of cultural centers from one place to another, both because the spread of civilization was seen as a responsibility and because, under the pressures of outside threats, civilizations could be destroyed. In the poems this movement was personified in the Prince, a kind of generalized protagonist in whom the various threats and promises found expression. Underlying the Prince's activities was a pervasive belief in the value of his mission, an optimism that faith in man would be productive, and a deposit of patience and endurance sufficiently strong to allow him to carry on until the day when the faith and the belief would join as the basis of the flourishing human enterprise civilization should be.

Washington in 1940 must have struck the exiled poet curiously. There he found the personal solitude he had so often used to characterize his protagonist, and there he found, too, a kind of scandalous haven momentarily spared the destruction visible elsewhere.

That place, Washington, and those years, 1940 and after, were clearly a refuge for the fertilizing forces of civilization; if deductive analysis could not, under the pressure of events, point to this truth, activity could.

Mr. McMahon, a member of the faculty at Yale University, has recently completed a study of Alexis Léger's poetry.

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In the sudden spurt of foreign language publications, as in the sometimes exaggerated appeals of MacLeish himself, could be found the evident marks of a perhaps limited but nonetheless determined effort to remember and continue the complex values of Western civilization. But at the same time Washington was also the center in which was being daily planned the most destructive war ever fought and, because of this, it represented a frightening paradox.

It was, quite simply and yet quite terribly, a question of man and his works, and of man and his works Alexis Léger had had some fine things to say, inspired from the very beginning of his career with a profound distrust of power philosophies and a deep commitment to the kind of ideal that had been wrought into literary splendor by the seventeenth century classicists. The war clearly imperilled these closely held beliefs, just as his own dismissal from the Foreign Service and his ensuing disgrace by the Vichy government which stripped him of his French citizenship seemed to make a mockery of the idea of human excellence his poetry had limned.

His poetic vision had sought to pay homage and honor to the human experience and, in so doing, both to continue the valuable development of that experience and to rescue French poetry from the fascination with sterility it had fallen victim to at the end of the nineteenth century. In the months after his arrival in this country, all this must have seemed sham and folly; civilization, whatever might be the eventual outcome of the war, must have seemed clearly doomed to the dictatorship of destructive technocracy; the humanist gesture must have seemed a futile, fluttering pose, a weak protesting hand raised against the unstoppable on-rush of immensely powerful forces.

THE IRONY, I have suggested, was a noble one. It was also a multi-faceted one, for if the poet found himself in a situation hauntingly similar to that he had sometimes evoked in his poetry, he found himself also in a place very much like some of those he had alluded to in his poems: a new land, being visited ever more frequently with reminders of its place in a larger, more diversified world, and yet strangely a land which could easily and perhaps too facilely be identified with the dangers of technocracy to its own detriment and the detriment of that larger world to which it so clearly belonged.

Awareness of this condition, like awareness that the poet might possibly have some rôle to play in situating it properly, grew slowly in the poet's imagination, principally because its force was diminished by a scepticism of the value of poetry he had expressed to MacLeish on his arrival. His first "American" poems—stimulated, he tells us, by an unwanted voice come back to stir him out of firm resolutions—are personal debates, tortured inner dialogues designed to measure at once the extent to which values proclaimed in earlier poems have any merit and the possibility of any continued worth for poetic statement itself.

The drama in a poem like "Exile" is quite simply the tension between despair and hope, with the scales tilting uncertainly in search of some measure which will justify the poet's exile. No conclusion is drawn, except perhaps the decision to continue the investigation into the function of the poet and the sense of possibly pervasive values in the tradition of poetry.

This investigation continues in the ensuing poems—"Rains," "Snows" and "Poem to a Foreign Lady"—and from it emerges not so much an optimism as a responsibility. The poet, we learn, sees things differently, not only because of the peculiar perspective located by his insights, but equally because, through his statements, he confers a valuable kind of organization on what otherwise might be a chaotic world; he gives it, in a limited but important sense, a symbolic power because he sees and understands the extent to which its qualities can become hopelessly enmeshed and so confused with its defects.

The poetic act—he is reminded of this by the Foreign Lady's plea—is not simply a means of forging personal and impenetrable armor against the assaults of the world; it also is a public responsibility to give that world a sense unseen by the technicians, not easily expressed by purely discursive minds and their methods. In the penultimate lines of the poem a sense of this mission is conveyed:

"I proceed, O memory! with my free man's stride, without horde or tribe, amidst the song of the hourglasses, and my bare forehead laureled with phosphorescent bees, at the foot of the vast sky of green steel as on the floor of a sea, whistling to my host of Sibyls, whistling to my host of incredulous ones . . ." (trans. by Denis Devlin, C. Bollingen Foundation)

The noble irony, once the continued power of poems to make uniquely valuable statements had been accepted, could then allow a return to the preoccupations expressed in the poems of the 1920's. But the return would necessarily involve change both in expression and in emphasis.

The threats and menaces which had served mainly as in principles of tension in those earlier poems assume, with "Winds," a disturbing reality the poet must deal with on terms not necessarily of his own creation. It is almost as though the slowly and deliberately articulated expression of faith in the poet's ability to impose sense on the world was being undermined by the realization that other forces are empowered with a similar capacity. There is no single way to organize human experience, but several, and because of this the task of poetry is subtly altered from that of imposing order to that of imposing values.

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This fact, I suspect, rather than sheer infatuation with rhetoric, is what explains the amplitude of the poem; quite simply, the old declarative register no longer has power. Stating that things *are* such a way does not make them *be* that way; the poem can no longer be bare statement but must be transformed into argument; it must seek in its complex, dense and sometimes obscure structure to become a symbol of the dense, complex and obscure situation it describes.

THIS COUNTRY serves as the backdrop to *Winds*. In its physical vastness, in the variety of its habits, people and occupations, as well as in the many values which struggle against each other in its almost boundless confines, the poet seems to have found the appropriate locale for the problem he is situating—appropriate both because it does genuinely represent many contradictory and conflicting things and because in a curious way it is at once a sampling of and a promise of continuity to European civilization.

The poem operates simultaneously on several levels, evoking both the current destructive forces sweeping through the world and the old destructive forces which, in the past, have been responsible for the discovery and exploration of the United States. It is the poem which confers unity on these different moments, not by seeking a solution to the insoluble problem of chronology but by seeking to find the imprint of man in the uncommitted forces of the winds. The winds symbolize power; but in themselves they have no value. It is to man that this task falls, and he can accept it either worthily or viciously; he can use power either to advance or to destroy himself.

The poem's search for this excellence—and it must be remembered that it is a vast poem—encounters a unique kind of crisis in the problem of the atomic bomb. Here the excellence of the human imagination and the ingenuity of human intelligence seem to have combined in an act of thorough nihilism, using important values to create a most serious threat and impediment to the continued expression of those same values. Under the force of the vast light and powerful wind created by the bomb, human experience is thrown into an almost irremediable darkness, an obscene irony —the cold which Edith Sitwell called the highest human idea, but the cold which, she hastened to add, is nothing.

Faced with this predicament, the poet is again on the testy fringe of despair, as he had been in "Exile." But, as was true in that poem, so here the very polarity of the situation indicates the way to some kind of solution.

What is involved in the bomb, like what was involved in his own exile and the inexplicable tyranny it seemed to confer on the absurd, is the kind of awful situation which has allowed man, throughout the history of the West, to see the threads of his dignity in a sometimes terribly shabby fabric. The force of the poem must become the complement to this other force, the thread of light in the cloth of darkness.

The poet's voice must serve to remind men of their dignity and potentialities even as it presents them with a clear picture of the perils. The poem itself must serve to create the second half of a dualism found in man by attracting him to the merit which the other half of the dualism persistently threatens. The poet becomes the witness for man, the poem his testimony in behalf of human excellence.

WHAT IS this excellence? It is, Léger seems to say, the movement through which man defines himself by giving values to his civilization. But the definition is not easily made, because it depends on the willingness to accept pain, to elect the unpleasant but productive choice rather than the pleasant and destructive one.

Despair—the sort of succumbing to fate that might have been so easily possible and so very attractive in wartime Washington—is really the choice of an easier way. The hell of life is in carrying on despite the forces that would engulf us at every moment; but the anguish and the pain are not without their compensations. Men do win victories; they do attain to excellence; they do bring continuity to their civilization; they do articulate ideals.

Men are, in short, free to elect the path they wish to follow, and they are urged along that path by the various impressive ceremonies human endeavor has learned to celebrate in its effort to arrive at understanding: the act of love, the desire for achievement, and—certainly not the least important—the sort of reflective statement and accomplishment brought about by a continually vigorous poetic presence. In poetry—this is seen clearly in Léger's two most recent poems, where the ground charted in "Winds" is developed and man's accomplishments celebrated—there is a paradigm of the human condition, for out of the imprecise tangle of obscure insights and fleeting impressions the poet, aware of how much pain and effort are the conditions of his own work, creates a humane object of enduring beauty which, in its loveliness, offers a challenge and a counter-balance to the forces of destruction and inhumanity.

So I, at least, read Alexis Léger. It is undoubtedly an honor to this country that he has chosen to live and write here, and that he has found in this nation sources for his poetic statements. But it is an honor which contains its own sobering suggestion. The way to human excellence, Alexis Léger reminds us, is a painful way; by avoiding the pain and the uncomfortable responsibilities it represents, we may be avoiding the achievements it leads to.

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"Liberal-Conservative Debate"

New York, N. Y.

TO THE EDITORS: By his own standards [Dec. 16] Mr. William Buckley is a Catholic conservative. But I fear he is not a gentleman. No one who knows Dorothy Day and her worth—certainly not the poor whom she serves so well—could so contemptuously evaluate her Faith as this grand Knight of Conservatism has done in The Commonweal. I have known Dorothy Day and her work since she and Peter Maurin opened their first House of Hospitality. These doors have never closed to a human need. There, the bewildered and the derailed, the lost sheep and lost shepherds found a house that was a home. I don't think Mr. Buckley could claim such service for Christ, and certainly not the right to bespittle it.

(Rt. Rev. Msgr.) JOHN P. MONAGHAN.

South Bend, Ind.

TO THE EDITORS: Although psychological probing is nowhere more suspect than among conservatives (see Mr. William Buckley's Freudian and deterministic bogeymen on the staff of the N. Y. *Post* in his recent Commonweal article), it would seem that this technique is especially called for in any attempt to understand the conservatives themselves.

And since Mr. Buckley, arch-spokesman for Catholic conservatism, adopts this very method when he diagnoses the liberals' root ailment as "insecurity" (apparently the objection depends upon which side is being dissected), advantage is hereby taken of the precedent.

Without going into any possible merits of Mr. Buckley's own argument, we may observe how remarkably close his analysis of liberalism has come to describing what I believe to be the basic motivation of much of modern conservatism: the fear of uncertainty. Not the normal need of thinking man for truth, or social man for stability, but another and altogether neurotic craving.

Early in his article Mr. Buckley betrays his wellsprings when he uses the words "slovenly" and "chaotic" in referring to the ideas of Dorothy Day. I am not proposing to defend Miss Day, whose greatness and influence will endure long after the Buckleys have contributed their bizarre little footnotes to history. I wish only to point out how, by his choice of words, Mr. Buckley discloses the conservative's intellectual fastidiousness, his yearning for smooth, soothing conviction, and in general the sort of mind whose close horizon is bounded by the comforting truth that 2 + 2 will always equal 4. Next evolves a psychology of nostalgia which is unable to abide the hurly-burly process of evolution and turns with relief to some neatly manicured ideal world, or to the safely petrified past.

The conservative exhibits a frequently actual, as well as symbolic, reaching for the days before The Revolution, and before the Reformation in the case of the Catholic conservative, times when God was in His Heaven and each man knew his place. (Not to be too charitably deterministic, it might be remarked that the conservative's vision of *his* place in this ideally stratified world never seems to find him among the hewers and drawers—the fastidiousness is not only intellectual.) Marvelously combining the worst characteristics of youth and old age in his brash search for reassurance, the conservative is serenely unworried by the violent cutting necessary to suit. Whence shallow dogmatism, half-truths, monochromatic labelings, and the rest.

Avoiding the conservative's own error of oversimplification, it must be added that there are, of course, degrees of conservatism, degrees of fearfulness. One whole tribe of conservatives, for example, seeks little more from the movement than that it unleash them into the market place for the undisturbed practice of the carnivorous economic arts. But by and large, and prescinding from the occasional objective validity of conservative causes, the impression left by this contentious, cocksure group is the paradoxical one of men "strangers and afraid in a world they never made." We can only wince in anticipation of the final stunning blow of the discovery that, after all, love, not order, is Heaven's first law. T. MCKIERNAN.

Syracuse, N. Y.

TO THE EDITORS: Mr. William F. Buckley Jr.'s "conservative view" in the issue of December 16 would be easier to grasp under another title than "The Catholic In The Modern World." "How To Scold Liberals Without Swearing," perhaps? Nowhere does his contribution to the debate reveal a clear statement of this "Catholic conservative" writer's position on Catholics in the modern world, other than that they should be "personally humble," "personally kind and tolerant" and that the Catholic who is liberal apparently should "show more toleration for his coreligionists than he sometimes tends to show."

Mr. Buckley compounds questions at the end of his article but the few answers he gives do not dispel the

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questions' when-did-you-stop-beating-your-wife and what-will-we-do-or-go-fishing qualities. The reader gets an idea of some of the things he is against, but little of what he is for. Free enterprise? Down with unions, civil rights and talks at Arden House? State support for parochial schools?

Mr. Buckley has "a feeling" that Catholic intellectuals of liberal bent have "half an eye trained over there in the direction of Paul Blanshard." He adds "If what I say is true, the Catholics in question are among other things wasting a lot of time." But supposing his feeling is not true, as many readers of some of the authors he mentions probably think? Want to bet that quite a number of articles in The Commonweal and elsewhere, and a couple of books, were written without even a passing thought for Mr. Blanshard?

Father George Dunne, S.J., an early author to reply knowledgeably to Mr. Blanshard's first full-book blast at the Catholic Church, was concerned with truth and with many readers other than Mr. Blanshard, readers Catholic and non-Catholic, liberal and conservative, seeking light on the troubled confusions of our time. Come, Mr. Buckley, Paul Blanshard is not *that* much of an institution. If you see over his shoulder the shadows of Pope Joan and Maria Monk, he is still a person, a human being by the grace of God, and it's not for the likes of us to depersonalize him.

The point is tiresomely missed in Mr. Buckley's questions about civil rights. Justice is still a cardinal virtue and thereby related to salvation of the Caucasian's soul, as well as to salvation of persons of other races.

Mr. Buckley comments on the fondness of writers in The Commonweal, *America* and the *Catholic World* for telling him what to think. The two latter I see only occasionally, but The Commonweal I have read steadily since its infancy in the nineteen-twenties. Somehow I must have missed important issues. I cannot recall Commonweal writers telling Mr. Buckley what to think, nor for that matter, telling anyone else what to think.

It is a temptation to substitute some adjectives for ones used by Mr. Buckley in reference to that great lady, Dorothy Day, whose work The Commonweal has sometimes published, whose person its editorials have sometimes praised, with some of whose ideas the editors have now and then publicly disagreed. If Miss Day has immunity to criticism anywhere (!) it seems less for the reasons Mr. Buckley suggests than for the potent force of *agape* with which her good and her lesser writings are permeated. The awe communicated to her readers, agreeing and disagreeing, is not because she would "test the promise of Christ Himself" but because she so patently believes His promises.

One word of comfort for Mr. Buckley's distress about criticism of "some Catholics by other Catholics." Is not the most uninhibited criticism usually encountered inside the family and most healthily tolerated there? MARJORIE MURPHY.

Seattle, Wash.

TO THE EDITORS: Referring to the "Debate" between Mr. Buckley and Mr. Clancy, it seems to me that the alternative presented is not inescapable, and I am not in search of any "moderatism."

On the whole my position is a good deal closer to Mr. Buckley's, although I rather regret the actions of Senators McCarthy and McCarran.

Mr. Clancy, if I understand rightly, regrets the reactionary attitude of Catholics in the United States as elsewhere, and praises the battles won by liberalism in the social field. A certain amount of credit is due to liberalism, but Mr. Clancy's is not a just appraisal. He should have used liberalism between quotation marks to show that we have to do with historical liberalism and the many injustices it entailed, and that we should take a closer look at "liberalism" today.

Is it not true that the liberals of the eighteenth century supported minority groups against, in France, a state-supported church, but that in doing so they did not separate the church from the state from the church as it was claimed? Hence the Catholics have to fight their own battles against an illiberal state, as Mr. Buckley said very well though in other words; this may be an extenuating circumstance for their "absence" elsewhere. The confessional schools—Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, etc.—should have the funds of the taxpayers and be *public* schools. The Catholics are backward in scholarship? But the agnostic school has all the funds. How can there be emulation? I pass over the deep harm done to the youth in education, harm perpetrated by the "liberal" school. JEAN DAVID.

Ithaca, N. Y.

TO THE EDITORS: "Towards the end of the nineteenth century there appeared two incredible figures; they were the pure Conservative and the pure Progressive; two figures which would have been overwhelmed with laughter by any other intellectual commonwealth in history. There was hardly a human generation which would not have seen the folly of merely going forward or merely standing still; of mere progressing or mere conserving."

If the world were still blessed by the living presence of the man who wrote these and other majestically sane words, it would perhaps be treated to his exposure of an even more incredible condition: the reversal of personalities between two strange phenomena, the Conservative and the Progressive (read: Liberal). The straight-laced, olympian Conservative and the apocalyptic radical or Liberal have been replaced by the fiery Conservative and the cautious, scholarly Liberal. There are Conservative Catholics and Liberal Catho-

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lics, Integrationist Catholics and Segregationist Catholics, Isolationist Catholics and Internationalist Catholics; I wonder if there are any sceptical—or, rather, like the author of the foregoing quotation, G. K. Chesterton, any amused—Catholics. For certainly both Liberals and Conservatives amuse *me;* this week's Commonweal presented the double-bill of Messrs. Clancy and Buckley for even further amusement.

The source of my scepticism, if it is not temperamental, lies in this: neither one actually cares for the present. Although obsessed by history, both the Conservative and the Liberal misuse it; the Conservative views history as a play in which the next to last act—the *now*—has been willfully and viciously miswritten, while the Liberal views it as a plan and tends the needs of the present by continually re-doing the design. History is neither a play nor a plan—at least insofar as human knowledge can determine (for it is no detraction from Divine Providence to deny that the plans of the Almighty can be mapped in such trivial ways). Some future researcher into the history of ideas will have to ponder the question whether the fundamental sameness of the mistake coupled with the conflicting doctrines derived therefrom is responsible for that most annoying feature of the Liberal-Conservative debate: the unmanageable semantic confusion.

In this particular exchange, both Mr. Clancy and Mr. Buckley get off to a very false start by seeing some sort of analogy between the position of the present-day Catholic *vis-à-vis* the secular, indifferent and naturalistic society of 1960, and the Church's dilemma about joining the civic life of a "pagan" culture in the first three centuries of its existence. One need only remember that in the latter case the Church was the innovator, and brought no particular culture with it, while in the former case, the Church is one of the major sources of the antecedent culture in which the new confabulations must take place—this one reminder is enough to conjure up myriad conditions, qualifications and concessions to any thoughtful man considering the problem.

But this is not the worst. Both contenders immediately thereupon labor to prove my major contention—the misuse of history—by asserting that their remedies for current problems have something to do with Catholicism. Not so much with Catholic principles, which might be a better forum for discussion, but with what I might call Catholic fact, Catholic history—Mr. Buckley, by saying, virtually, that Catholic practice once handled such problems correctly but that the will or the skill to do so has been lost; Mr. Clancy, by saying that Catholic practice failed in times past, but that it has been recalled to its true course in our own day and can now proceed to do its duty.

Mr. Buckley deceives himself to the effect that "Catholic periods" in our past history actually achieved more wholesome social arrangements because they were uniformly Catholic and had a proper hierarchy of values, all consciously held by Catholics because they made for stability and propriety. Yet the facts are that Europe, when uniformly Catholic, had both good and bad marks on social wholesomeness, depending on the period you choose to study; and further—some of the best marks occur in times of uproarious debate and disagreement within Christendom. Since history is not a scenario, but a hodge-podge, conservatives like Mr. Buckley must bow to the historical fact that Christians are not a different species of animal from other men, and therefore that they may act in any number of ways because of any number of influences and motives; in particular, they live in contact with the special preoccupations of their own times, and because of the innocence, evil, or irrelevance of these preoccupations —which, to a contemporary, so often seem to have nothing particularly to do with their faith—they may be mediocre Christians but good citizens, immature citizens but good Christians, evil Christians but rabid patriots, and any number of other possible combinations. When, happily, the state of Christian living and the condition of society are both good, the facts further suggest that, though the second condition is a result of the first, it came about, not because of some sudden illumination of a whole program of social behavior by the light of the Faith, but through a piecemeal, painstaking and practical approach to each individual problem, accompanied by hearty and rational debate. But such debate in which the contenders were sensible enough to realize that most public questions are ones of degree and that no "package" of social ideas, whether Liberal or Conservative, has a Divine patent, much less the practical capability of sustaining an organic society, Christian or otherwise.

Mr. Clancy, though not really Mr. Buckley's Liberal (only one symptom of the linguistic impasse) would make Liberal Catholicism simply the regained voice of Christian sympathy and thirst-for-justice, mute during many years of fear, confusion and ineptitude. Limited strictly to motivation, this may well be true, but in the matter of Liberal *programs,* we must hedge the point with so many provisos as to hide it completely from view. I say this for two reasons. First, it is to demand unbelievable clairvoyance from what remained of Catholic Europe in the Age of Enlightenment, to see that a movement begun with the aims of establishing the Secular State, destroying revealed religion, and inspired with vague devotion to Science or Nature, would end up as an effort to establish democracy, an international rule of law, and a social committment to decent minimal conditions of living for all classes of society. One might say when the Liberal movement became somewhat civilized through the attrition of common sense, and when the timeless human instinct for fair play could again make its voice heard over the clamor

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of the innocents who believed that a reworking of the basic ground-plan of society would make the world a paradise—at this juncture, one can say, Catholics could join forces with the descendants of the earlier radicals or Liberals, for the simple reason that the Liberals had calmed down and come around to more reasonable and matter-of-fact positions. But these positions were not specifically "Liberal"; they were merely humane and Catholics should have supported them in any case.

The fact one must remember is that these latter-day Liberal positions were not the issue when the world crossed the "watershed" of the French Revolution. Unfortunately, the lineal descendants of the radical movements, many generations removed from the great break with the Faith, are now what Father John Courtney Murray calls "new barbarians," that is, rootless and variable people, influenced by, and disrespectful of, our Western culture, with its Christian genius; they are always, as Father Murray says, potential destroyers of civilization and society.

But even the worst barbarians are men; and our own barbarians seem to have fairly good instincts, amenable to the civilizing effects of Christendom. When their good instincts concur with Christian humanity and common sense, this does not imply that there is some sort of Catholic Liberal program in the making, but only that, given a condition of civilization not uniformly Christian, some Catholics choose to cooperate as men with other men in evolving the next stage of society, whatever that may be, in the spirit of the gentle and urbane St. Gregory of Nyssa, who showed respect and appreciation for his pagan teachers and the cultural values they represented.

As to the notion that Liberalism has fought the battles that Catholics should have joined, I must comment that the battles are not the same as liberal principles or programs, After all, the European revolutions, whether social or political, were reactions to serious and unhappy conditions and human evils usually have human remedies. If and when Catholics joined these movements, it was as men and not specifically as Catholics. From this we cannot fairly deduce that such movements were necessarily the result of Liberal thinking, or that there was a greater responsibility for Catholics to rebel, than for other men.

My second objection runs deeper: there is really no meaningful definition of Liberalism any more. Mr. Buckley's *omnium-gatherum* of utopians, pinkos, one-worlders, and the rest, demonstrates the sterility of the concept. My scepticism forbids me to believe that there is a Conservative and Liberal solution for each social problem, or that there are only two answers, one right and one wrong. There are degrees of solutions, which need be tested. I suggest that the best test is still the old tripartite scheme of the ancient rhetoricians, the three *officia* of public deliberation and activity: the *bonum,* the *honestum,* and the *utile.* It should be patently absurd for a reasonable man to pledge himself perpetually to either the Liberal or Conservative fraternity and find within either framework the answers, or even the principles to be used in finding the answers, to our political and social problems. Personally, I doubt that many of the better answers will be found in either camp.

Therefore, may I enter my demurrer against the proposition that this debate gives an intelligent picture of the Catholic vocation in the secular world. Catholic thought and effort is, first of all, not to be herded into two opposing corrals. Second, I hope that there are a few more sceptics like myself who do not believe that these two positions have any meaning whatsoever. Mr. Clancy's Catholic Liberalism seems to me shadowy, insubstantial and a poor substitute for a strong Christian humanism which can keep its identity while dealing manfully and positively with both the good and bad in secular culture. Mr. Buckley's entertainingly glandular exposition, on the other hand, seems to be an overconfident soothsayer's endeavor to advise all the profane on God's solemn will for every paltry detail of social structure, whose result is the gallimaufry of hints and smirks about Negro integration, Scholasticism and the free market (wherein his notions about both history and economics seem a bit underdone, if not half-baked), utopianism (although the greatest utopian of them all was the arch-conservative, Plato) and such like braveries, which I suspect, despite his words about conformity of Catholic thinking, are aimed at a conformity which he thinks exists in opposition to himself.

DOUGLAS J. STEWART.

Washington, D. C.

TO THE EDITORS: Mr. Buckley is an able champion. He is clever and he is sinuous. Inadvertently, perhaps, he gives himself away: he does not love mankind. Like the blind man in the fable, he has touched only the head of the elephant.

A little bit of history is captured in every political event, but mankind is not chained forever to the accidents of history. There is a continuity in the story, and it is related to a reaching constantly toward the ideal of community among men. Not all who reach are philosophers, but many are religious people, and in their reaching, with all the political action it entails, they know that not even the meanest person is expendable.

In the practical wisdom of the Good Samaritan logic is one of the least important factors. Mr. Buckley has much to learn about the extremities of the elephant—and the heart.

VERNON X. MILLER,
Dean, School of Law,
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THE SCREEN

A WORLD THEY NEVER MADE

IT IS INTERESTING that only one of four recently released films about young people is set in the present. All four illustrate, however, some of the conflicts which maturing young men and women must face today. Strangely enough, the best of the four comes from Russia.

The well-named "Ballad of a Soldier" is just that—a visually poetic odyssey of a teen-age hero who gets six days leave from the horrors of war to visit his mother and fix the roof. Practically the whole film, after opening scenes which show the young soldier blowing up two enemy tanks and then being awarded the longed-for leave instead of a medal, is concerned with his efforts to get home and his experiences along the way. The difficulties of wartime travel, the crowded trains, the selfishness of some people who could help him but won't, and the kindliness of others who do, are all part of the long journey, and so are the more detailed episodes portraying the likable young hero's efforts to assist his fellows. He guides a one-legged soldier back to his wife; he delivers two bars of soap for another soldier whose wife turns out to be unfaithful; he is attracted to a young girl who at first fears him and then becomes devoted to him before they separate.

If director Grigori Chukhrai, who also wrote the script with Valentin Yoshov, hadn't handled all these scenes so well, "Ballad of a Soldier" would have been merely a boy scout's marching song about a sentimental journey. But the film skillfully balances the good with the bad, the sweet with the bitter, and through the course of the long trip the naive, beardless boy grows wiser but not cynical about the behavior of men. The role is effectively played with freshness and charm and boyish virility by Vladimir Ivashov; and Shanna Prokhorenko plays the frightened and adoring girl with a simple grace that makes their budding romance quite believable. In fact, simplicity heightened by poetic realism is the keynote of this whole film about a boy's growth during a wasteful and destructive war. This thoughtful simplicity makes all the more stirring the final scenes, in which the boy gets home only in time to say hello and goodbye to his mother before returning to the front, and all the more heartbreaking the film's final words: "He would have grown into a fine man."

ELVIS PRESLEY is much more bitter about the problems confronting him in "Flaming Star," a drama about racial conflicts in western back country in the 1870's. Elvis has cause to be unhappy: he is the son of a white father (John McIntire) and an Indian mother (Dolores Del Rio) and, although he and his white stepbrother (Steve Forrest) are the closest of friends and the whole family are portrayed with loving warmth, their neighbors just won't leave them be. When the Kiowa Indians, resentful over the encroachments on their lands, attack the whites, the white townsfolk come to the McIntire family and demand to know what side they're on; then, to add to the confusion, the Indians insist that Elvis join them in their fight against the whites.

Needless to say, Elvis' family has no easy time of it, caught as they are between the Indians, who are ruthlessly savage in their onslaughts, and the whites who are despicably mean to this family because they think they are in cahoots with the Kiowas. Elvis Presley, who sings only one song in the film and takes his acting assignment seriously, comes through quite well as the disturbed young man, and the cast around him give him fine support. The main trouble with "Flaming Star," however, is that it has so much violence and so many deaths, in fight after fight, that the conflicts become tedious. The film's craggy scenery in color and the script's plea for tolerance are among its assets.

THE YOUNGER generation of Chicago's wild 1920's as portrayed in "Studs Lonigan" seem to get no guidance at all from their elders. As these callow

MARIA ANGELICA

(Excerpt from a missionary's letter)

"Maria Angelica is twelve. For a long time her mother knew the little girl had leprosy but she tried to keep it hidden, in horror of the day her daughter would be sent to the public leprosy camp.

"Last September neighbors insisted Maria be sent away. But because the leprosy camp is dreaded by all, Father X arranged to have the child enter the poor little leprosy colony we conduct here for Bishop Y.

"Maria screamed with terror when she first met the other victims of leprosy here. Actually they've been kindness itself to her. They remember what it was like for themselves in the beginning, before they found out that leprosy is curable . . ."

CMMB helps missionaries care for thousands of children like Maria Angelica, suffering from leprosy and many other diseases.

Please help us. Send whatever you can to

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Dept. C 8 West 17th Street New York 11, N.Y.

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youths go on their wasteful way they are almost symbolic of this aimless period, and if one could forget that this is supposed to stem from James T. Farrell's trilogy, one might find it a fairly interesting and provocative movie.

Philip Yordan, who gave "Studs Lonigan" its good production, also attempted the practically impossible task of writing the script, but he changed and condensed the lengthy Farrell opus so much that he might better have started with a new plot. What the film has caught effectively through Irving Lerner's skillful direction is the purposelessness of Studs and his gang as they hang around street corners, whistle at the girls and get into one scrape after the other in this depressing and crowded neighborhood of the South Side of Chicago.

Although Christopher Knight is too inexperienced an actor for the difficult title role, the rest of the cast succeed admirably in bringing the many smaller parts to life. The picture consists mainly of a series of episodes, some impressionistic, some realistic, a few going beyond the bounds of good taste, but all adding up to the emptiness of Studs' life. One thing to be said in defense of these youths from the wrong side of the tracks is they at least didn't have the advantages or education enjoyed by most of the slick young people known as the lost generation in the jazz age. Studs Lonigan and his gang wandered wearily through a world they really never made.

TODAY'S YOUTH, at least those on display in "Where the Boys Are," have the advantages of schooling. The results may not be particularly satisfactory to their parents, but if they attend this movie they may find out what some of the college kids at least are up to when they flock down to Fort Lauderdale, Fla., on spring vacations. They'll learn that undergraduates are much more frank about sex than their parents were and that there's a great deal of talk about and some practice of premarital intercourse. The film, for which George Wells wrote the lively script from Glendon Swarthout's novel, may be fairly reliable social anthropology and worth taking seriously, but its danger as entertainment is in its laughing at and glamorizing the whole situation.

The girls in this rather strange film (Dolores Hart, Paula Prentiss, Yvette Mimieux, Connie Francis) go to Florida because that's where the boys (George Hamilton, Rory Harrity, Jim Hutton, Frank Gorshin) are. This eight-some is rather attractive; but the standards of the young people they portray are less so. Director Henry Levin mixes fun and games and serious matter at such a fast pace that the audience may not realize till later how shocking some of this is. But producer Joe Pasternak, whose serio-comic picture may be more accurate than tasteful, is so sure that the film will be a success that he's planning a sequel, to be called, naturally, "Where the Girls Are."

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

BOOKS

Problems of Aesthetic Value in the Film

THEORY OF FILM. By Siegfried Kracauer. Oxford University Press. $10.
THE THREE FACES OF THE FILM. By Parker Tyler. Yoseloff. $6.95.

By ARLENE CROCE

CINEMA IS the one art whose devotees have felt the need to prove over and over not only that it exists as an art but that it exists at all. The feeling is that accepting the movies as art ought to be contingent upon their being "cinematic," an adjective which theoretically implies a qualitative definition in a formal sense, but which is in some dispute as a critical absolute. Was Mondrian "painterly"? Formerly it was popularly held that for a movie to be a movie it had only to move—in space (via the mobile camera) or in time (via flashbacks: "It's such a *movie* movie," said *Vogue* of "All About Eve"). Yet Dovzhenko's "Earth," the late films of Eisenstein, or those of Dreyer, Bresson and the Japanese master Ozu don't move in this way and don't want to.

Adherents of the "visual principle" maintain that no words, sound or music are needed to make a film cinematic; but the sound montages of "Citizen Kane" and "Hiroshima, Mon Amour," to name only two of the most progressive examples, have been rich expressions of movie synthesism. Commercial formulae have imprisoned film in its secondary manifestation as a visual recording process for mass distribution of "hot" properties. Films built around box-office idols, Broadway plays and best-sellers appear around the globe, thus stimulating whole schools of interlinear criticism obsessed with the unconscious aura of meaning that attaches, almost illicitly, even to the most demonstrably trashy product, and which is the true source of movie magic.

What, precisely, constitutes art in a film? The question concerns neither an isolated aesthetic value nor a physiological preference; nor, assuming that a film's subject stands for something besides an excuse, is it exclusively a matter of incidental "beauties" of *mise-en-scène*—art on the sneak. The question of art, as it applies to film, and as it is so applied in the two books under review, devolves with a sharp poignance upon the old classroom dilemma, that of form and content, "appearance" and "reality." It is

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in the film that form (not technique) is least easily separated from content—a truism, certainly, yet it has conventionally been the distance between raw material and refined form that determines status among the established arts. Is genuine film art produced according to methods of creative analysis shared by all other arts, or is it something new altogether?

Siegfried Kracauer has written a long and highly repetitious book, which he has called *Theory of Film,* ostensibly to prove the truth of the latter contention. Dr. Kracauer's approach, to put the best face upon it, is that of an enlightened amateur or lay intellectual. Unlike other film theoreticians — Eisenstein, Pudovkin, Grierson, Rotha, Zavattini—he is not himself a practitioner, and his only other major work in the area of film has been the fascinating *From Caligari to Hitler,* a work of primarily sociological rather than aesthetic importance. The present book does not represent theory at all, but a lot of criticism of a lot of movies, distinguished by uncertain taste and an overwhelming *idée fixe.*

Dr. Kracauer writes with due regard for the rules of logical construction; his categories seem complete, his definitions watertight, his pronouncements just. His study may be professional by the standards of a doctoral thesis; by any more usable standards he does not begin to scale his subject. Dr. Kracauer's "theory," in brief (and I find that brevity does it no disservice), is that as movies cannot, in the manner of painting and the drama, absorb and recast the physical reality which is their raw material, they cannot be ranked among, or compared to, the established arts; that it is the special dispensation of films, as an extension of photography, to capture "transient material phenomena," to "penetrate the world before our eyes"; that films are cinematic only to the extent that they succeed in doing so; that, this being so, films devoted to history, fantasy, tragedy, "inward life, ideology, and spiritual concerns" are devoted to uncinematic subjects. The natural subject of cinema, says Dr. Kracauer, is "physical reality"; the subtitle of his book is "The Redemption of Physical Reality," and it is his conviction that the concreteness of film offers its audience a respite from the prevailing abstraction of the modern world and a chance to grasp or, as Dr. Kracauer has it, "shake hands with" the reality of our surroundings.

Now I do not wish to suggest that *Theory of Film* is valueless; one is impressed by the amounts of refuse Dr. Kracauer, with his one little wagon marked "realism", is able to cart away. All of these points, once clarified and elaborated (but not by Dr. Kracauer), are at least arguable, except the last—film as an answer to abstraction—which is perfectly true. But they are all arguments one has heard before, and the objection here must be to the form into which Dr. Kracauer has put them. It is a form which renders them inaccessible to artists.

Nowhere in the book is there any real talk such as artists might understand. This cannot be emphasized too strongly. Dr. Kracauer has written the first self-proclaimed book on film theory to be published in this country since the advent of sound; it bears all the earmarks of a revisionary tract. To whom ought he to be speaking, if not to the artist? Instead he addresses some hypothetical dunce who has not until this moment been apprised of the fact that there are quite a lot of filmic devices designed to make you think certain things about what you are seeing. Worse than this is Kracauer's way of dawdling over negligible or worthless films merely to illustrate a point. No serious literary critic would set out to write a book on theory and practice in the twentieth-century novel, as exemplified by, say, two or three Joyces on the one hand and fifty Herman Wouks on the other. Until films can be discussed, in whatever terms, as seriously as novels, why should we read about them?

He is not alone in his formulation of film art, but he writes as though he were. This is what makes the thinking of the book so insular. The chapters on acting, music, dialogue and sound, and the spectator, for a supposedly eye-opening book, are grimly platitudinous. Those on the documentary, the experimental film, and the adaptation are com-

THE CARNIVAL ARK

Their bodies hourglassed and multiplied
by mirrors warped beside the handrail route
and angled to reflect reflected faces
to infinity, the crowds invade the ark
that rolls obedient to hidden engines
Noah never knew when he survived
the forty days and forty nights of rain.

Mounted in the tipping fo'c's'le, Noah's wife
stares dumbly at the slowing ferris wheel,
the roller coasters rocketing and clacking
down the tunneled rails, the clowns with blown
balloons aloft and moored like zeppelins
to carts where popcorn bounces into bloom
and ping-pongs lightly on the buttered glass.

Quick jets of air spurt upward from the deck,
and skirts umbrella out like capes to show
the gartered hose and vaccinated thighs
to gawkers-by, but Noah never breaks
his vigil for the peaks of Ararat
now just beginning to emerge between
the spookhouse and the coca-cola lights.

SAMUEL HAZO.

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promised by a tendency to select for punishment only those films—bad jobs, in other words—which confirm the bias of the book. He criticizes the avant garde for imitating the forms and imagery of modern abstract painting as if this were the desideratum of the whole movement and not its chief weakness. In the section on stage versus screen, and *passim,* he picks monotonously on "Pygmalion," a film one might go to with pleasure for many reasons other than to measure the success of its transference from the theater. He does not mention any of the truly ambitious films made from plays: Wyler's "The Little Foxes," Sjoberg's "Miss Julie," Cocteau's "Les Parents Terribles." His discussion of novels-into-film recapitulates many of the points made by George Bluestone in his unmemorable book of that title, and makes no mention of Donskoi's filming of the Gorki trilogy, of which Part One, "The Childhood of Maxim Gorki," is surely one of the greatest films ever made.

But the most curious absences of all are on the positive side and involve writers and film makers whose work might have been expected to lend prestige to certain aspects of the Kracauer thesis. Incredibly, James Agee and Cesare Zavattini are virtually ignored. Neither in the chapter on sound nor in the one on documentary is there any reference to the films of Humphrey Jennings or those of Alain Resnais, whose films on paintings also go unnoticed. André Bazin, an extremely influential critic and theorist who might, indeed, be the French Kracauer, is not mentioned at all. If for some reason the Doctor feels betrayed by his allies he does not say so. The truth is that his is in the majority view.

It has always been the film of deliberately unnaturalistic proportions that has found least favor among critics and public. Eisenstein's "Ivan the Terrible," Cocteau's "Blood of a Poet," Dreyer's "Day of Wrath" and "Ordet," Bresson's "Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne" renounce the naturalism which is film's obvious prerogative for the conscious interiority or formal unity of literature, theater and painting. The spectacle of calculated artifice in these films has caused much beard-stroking and head-wagging among even the most ardent promoters of the medium's capacities, and many, like Dr. Kracauer, are driven to anathematize it. Those who, like myself, admire the unaccustomed grandeur of these films too much to be more than fleetingly discomforted by the feeling that it makes them slightly ridiculous—the way Martha Graham is always slightly ridiculous even though you know you are in the presence of high art—can look to Parker Tyler for his calm assurance that this kind of vision is not only possible to the movies but proper to them. *"Of course* the movies are to be compared to painting, literature and the drama," he writes, "and for the best reasons!" And again: "Creative films must obey a synthesis of aesthetic principles that have existed since the origin of the visual arts."

Mr. Tyler's is somewhat of a minority view; he is the foremost chronicler of film's other life. His criticism has long proposed that we regard film, not as passive journalism, but as art, "dream," and "cult," the "three faces" it simultaneously assumes in our experience of it, or—as Mr. Tyler would perhaps prefer to put it—in its experience of us. If Dr. Kracauer sees film as a window, Mr. Tyler sees it as a mirror. The basic issue over which they clash is the issue of reality as photography establishes it.

Just as Dr. Kracauer would reject Mr. Tyler's assertion that the movies are but one expression of the total imaginative faculty and therefore a branch of traditional art, Mr. Tyler would entertain no such distinction as Dr. Kracauer makes in his claim that "camera-reality," in and of itself, constitutes "art with a difference." Looking at "Rashomon," for example, Tyler is reminded of Picasso's "Girl Before a Mirror." For him, "Rashomon" joins with dominant movements of modern art in expressing the endless divisibility of man's spiritual being. For Kracauer, even though it fights camera-reality by taking place in the eighth century A.D., "Rashomon" becomes cinematic by falling into one of his cinematic genres—the film of detection, "dedicated to the exposure of hidden material facts."

It is not too facile to suggest that the quarrel is really over whether the movies shall serve knowledge through Science or through Art. The scientific proposition, however, bears less and less scrutiny the more one learns about art. Recent investigations such as E. H. Gombirch's *Art and Illusion* point to a radical revision of all that has been popularly claimed for visual style through the ages. The science-art puzzle assumes crucial significance for our contemporary reappraisal of creative tradition. Remarkable, isn't it, to think that the movies, yes, the movies, which now provide a key to the puzzle, may yet provide its solution.

Notable Novelette

THE LIGHT IN THE PIAZZA. By Elizabeth Spencer. McGraw-Hill. $3.

By MAX COSMAN

IF ELIZABETH Spencer needs any proof of her right to the praise former efforts like *Fire in the Morning* and *A Voice at the Back Door* have gained her, she has it in *The Light in the Piazza.* Though this latest offering is hardly more than a novelette, it is still a notable piece of work.

What strikes one first is its delicate perception of emotion. A quality of this sort is perhaps to be expected. What is not, and is therefore the more gratifying, is the book's control of sentiment. There is never a slopping over into sentimentality.

Not surprisingly, then, a similar consistency prevails in other respects. Everything is ordered. The end, for example, is implicit in the beginning, and the details in between, significantly selected, add up to something that makes constant sense.

Fullness of implication and nar-

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rative flow, however, are not all there is to *The Light in the Piazza.* It has a very contemporary theme: the interaction of differing nationals. In mediating between these, rather than in defending the one at the expense of the other, it not only meets the test of present thought on the matter, it actually gives fresh treatment to its Jamesian problem.

Signor Naccarelli is Miss Spencer's representative Italian. As she presents him, he is logical, mannered, capable of the devious, and as a true bourgeois, sensitive to the main chance. Mrs. Johnson, in turn, is no less characteristically American. Civic leader and hostess of Winston-Salem, she is efficient but feminine, forthright by choice, but when compelled, quite capable of wielding whatever power she has.

She is soon compelled to wield every last bit of it, for she is a mother with a dream, namely, to see her daughter Clara lead a normal life. But the poor thing is not normal. When she was ten, she was kicked in the head by her pony, and this was the dire result: her intellect became fixed at precisely what it was at the time of the accident. Had her body remained in harmony thereafter, all might have been well, relatively speaking. Unfortunately, it did not; it continued to mature normally.

Now a traveler and in Florence, she is a child-woman of twenty-six in love with Fabrizio, Signor Naccarelli's son. It is part of the irony of the situation that her imbalance doesn't militate against her either with Fabrizio who returns her love or with his friends who are no great intellects either.

So far as can be judged, her innocence and beauty assure her of the consideration she immediately needs. And her dowry of fifteen thousand dollars, a striking one in the eyes of the society about her, seems a sure guarantee of her future. Certainly, at the moment, it is winning over Signor Naccarelli to such adjustment as he has to make to chronology. (Despite the impression of youth she gives, Clara is three years older than Fabrizio.)

All that has to be done is to consummate the dream. And consumate it Mrs. Johnson does, though much is exacted from her. To start with, she has to circumvent her husband whose intransigence is something to reckon with. Simultaneously she has to compound with her conscience, though she does try on one or two occasions to tell the Naccarellis the whole truth.

But the most urgent payment she has to make is to part with her daughter. That agony—here we are back not only to Henry James but to E. M. Forster and others who have made contributions to the literature of international relationships—is exacerbated by the doubts that persist in her at the sight of social and religious mores different from her own.

Finally, of course, the deed is done. The ceremony over, the happy couple go off to the bliss which is theirs by virtue of affection and parental maneuver. In the vacuum left by the departure Mrs. Johnson notes some tourists trying to take the sort of picture tourists usually take. They are hampered by the day's brilliance.

Suddenly the memory of an accident comes back to her. Again she sees one who was hurt struggling to get up, while near him, silent in bronze, in the calm repose of triumph, stands Cellini's statue of Perseus holding aloft the Medusa's head.

The tableau is not inadvertent. In its several elements our author is obviously giving those last symbolic touches called for by her parable of a human being conquering dread limitations in the fierce glare of nature.

Bi-National Novel

A MIDDLE CLASS EDUCATION. By Wilfrid Sheed. Houghton Mifflin. $4.75.

By THOMAS CURLEY

BEFORE THE beginning and after the end of Mr. Sheed's first novel, there are a pair of italicized passages having to do with James and Oswald, tourists at Oxford. One of them has a nephew who once attended Oxford. It seems to Oswald that fellows like his own nephew, middle-class chaps who never would have gone to Oxford twenty years ago, must be changing the happy monotony of Oxford tradition according to which ". . . parsons begot parsons (or anti-parsons), rugger players begot rugger players (or anti-rugger players), dons ditto dons. . . ." At the end, or just after, one learns that the nephew who attended Oxford had "gone down," had married a nice girl in a proper way in church. "It was like a devil going out of someone" said Oswald, but added to himself that there are such things as "conventional devils."

The case of the nephew is pretty much the story of the book proper whose main character is one John Chote, also middle-class and also of Oxford, Sturdley College to be exact. Chote has managed to create for himself the reputations of a rake, which he is not, and of a lazy scholar, which he is also not. By reading early in the morning when nobody is about he earns, or

HELOISE TO ABELARD

This be our covenant: No high-noon thing
To stir dead earth and resurrect the years
Begot in trespass, baptised with such tears
As fallen angels shed remembering
The days before. Our love's Eternal Now
Makes penance sweet for so much sweetness past:
Die, Abelard, to live! And at the last,
Shrive me of nights when Spring sleeps on the bough,
And a long God-vowed woman wakes and sighs
For her young face reflected in your eyes.

JEANNE L. HERRLIN.

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is awarded, a scholarship that will take him to the States for a year of further study. And so for no good reason he leaves England and his Daphne, with whom, as I judge, he had been most domestically, if not platonically, comfortable, for the utter madness of New York and a stereotypical Miss Richbitch name of Mirabelle with whom he has a dull and most annoying affair. Young Mr. Chote is delivered from the States by his father's death. He leaves never again to return. And when they won't let him return to Oxford, he decides to resume proper middle-class status and go in for selling weighing machines or tools. He decides to be like his father, Smiling Jack Chote.

That anonymous nephew no doubt wanted to be like his father. So do they all, or most, want to be like their fathers. They are all possessed of the conventional devil. In Balzac's *Goriot,* Eugene Rastignac, at the end, declares war on society and goes to dinner with Mme. de Nucingen. John Chote and that nephew capitulate. Chote tears up unread the letter from the American Nucingen and laughs and laughs because "it seemed the only thing to do."

The main flaw I find in Mr. Sheed's novel is that the world, the particular world which Chote finally renounces, never appears very attractive: Oxford is dull as cold tea, and New York, in Mr. Sheed's view, a vestibule of Hell itself. The only world that Mr. Chote knows which is at all alive is his home, his middle-class home. I have seldom read a novel which improved so much and so suddenly as does this novel with Chapter 8, entitled "Going Home." The characterizations of Chote's parents lead me to think that Mr. Sheed is indeed a capable writer with something to say. I can only say that I wish Chote had gone home more often and stayed longer. Consider the following paragraph about Chote's father:

> "But by the time John was ten, he knew for sure that the old man was stiffening up. For one thing, he took to wearing his Sunday-best suit and vest—navy blue with stripes—all the time, including Saturdays. He seldom went out with John or his little sister Sheila any more—it was always time to be getting home for the news broadcast. He never missed the six, seven, nine and ten broadcasts; and John could remember trying to sit still (it was like listening to four sermons on one Sunday) watching back and forth his mother who was knitting patiently by the fire, and his father hunched over the wireless, his face tense and troubled. It began with the war, but carried over into the peace. There seemed to be nothing in the world except news any more."

Had Mr. Sheed written more paragraphs like that, had he risked ridicule and the charge of sentimentality, he might have ended with Eugene Rastignac instead of the anonymous nephew. He has written his "binational" novel; I hope he settles down now and writes what he feels as well as what he knows.

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